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ABSTRACT

This study, conducted by Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas examined the perceptions of 104 school administrators regarding the use of career advancement portfolios in the hiring process. The study occurred in rural, suburban, and urban school districts in the greater Houston, Texas area. Participants completed a four-question interview that examined: (1) the extent to which selected practicing administrators were familiar with the career advancement portfolio; (2) the extent to which individuals used career advancement portfolios in interviews; (3) expectations the administrators had for career advancement portfolios with regard to contents; and (4) administrators' recommendations regarding the use of career advancement portfolios during the interview process. Results indicated that 68 percent of the administrators were familiar with career advancement portfolios, though very few were familiar with their use among administrative candidates or hired administrative candidates who presented their portfolios during interviews. About half of the respondents would like to see evidence of conferences or workshops attended or presented in career advancement portfolios. Others wanted to see resumes and evaluations of past performance. Most administrators did not know how career advancement portfolios should be used during the interview process. Of those with suggestions, most recommended presenting them prior to the interview. (Contains 13 references.) (SM)

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Running Head: CAREER ADVANCEMENT PORTFOLIOS

Recent Developments in the Use of Career Advancement Portfolios for Administrators: Implications for Leadership Preparation Programs

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Recent Developments in the Use of Career Advancement Portfolios for Administrators: Implications for Leadership Preparation Programs

Although portfolios have been recommended as an alternative form of assessment of preservice administrators in leadership preparation programs (Cornett & Hill, 1991; Daresh & Playko, 1995; Guaglinone, 1996; Muse, 1992; Muth, Murphy, Martin, & Sanders, 1996), little has been written related to the inclusion of portfolios for career advancement as a component of leadership preparation programs (Brown & Irby, 1996; Daresh & Playko, 1994; Guaglinone, 1996). Because of the lack of data regarding the use of portfolios, this study was conducted to gain deeper insights into the use of career advancement portfolios in the educational employment process of administrators.

The administrative portfolio is defined as a collection of thoughtfully selected items or artifacts and accompanying reflections that indicate an individual's experience and ability to lead (Brown & Irby, 1995). Although much has been written concerning portfolios for teachers and students, little research has been conducted involving career advancement portfolios for potential and practicing administrators. In fact, in a thorough review of the literature, only five reports appear with regard to career advancement portfolios for administrators (Brown & Irby, 1991, 1996, 1997; Daresh & Playko, 1994; Guaglinone, 1996). Brown and Irby (1991; 1997) and Guaglinone (1996) advocate that the specific contents of the career advancement portfolio should be reflective of the position sought and of the qualifications revealed in the job announcement.

Brown and Irby (1997) suggest that the career advancement portfolio should include the following minimum components: 1) résumé, 2) Leadership Framework, 3) five-year administrative goals, 4) artifacts and reflections representing general leadership experiences, curriculum experiences, interactions with students, parents and community, presentations, committee work, professional growth experiences, and 5) accolades.

1. Résumé: A current résumé should be included. Some individuals choose to place a résumé of two to three pages at the beginning of the portfolio and a vita,

which presents at length details of their professional career, at the end of the portfolio. The résumé should include a career objective (tailored to the position sought) and a listing of certifications or endorsements, education, experience, and areas of concentration and strengths related to the position. If the individual does not include the vita at the end of the portfolio, a slightly longer résumé should be included -- approximately four to five pages.

2. *Leadership Framework*: The "Leadership Framework" (Brown & Irby, 1997) is similar to the personal platform advocated by Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993). While the platform is broad and can be used by all educators, the "Leadership Framework" is a summary of beliefs and attitudes that project the administrators' leadership philosophy and vision. It was developed strictly for use by administrators. The components of the Leadership Framework are: philosophy of education, philosophy of leadership, vision for learners, vision for teachers, vision for the organization, vision for professional growth, and method of vision attainment. Each component is usually written as a paragraph and generally should not consist of more than two pages.

3. *Five-year Administrative Goals:* This is usually a one-page description of the individual's professional goals for the next five years. The inclusion of personal leadership goals in the career advancement portfolio conveys to the readers that the preservice administrator has a career direction and a plan for developing needed skills or maintaining currency.

4. *Artifacts and Reflections*: This category is the heart of the career advancement portfolio, because it is the component that provides authentic examples of the preservice administrator's work and his/her interpretation of the impact or significance of the experiences. The artifacts and reflections for this type portfolio should be organized according to leadership skills, expectations, or duties outlined in the vacancy announcement.

In a 1996 study on the effectiveness of career advancement portfolios for women, Brown and Irby found that the development and use of career advancement portfolios effectively addressed women's lack of self-confidence, lack of sophistication regarding advancement techniques, and feelings of inadequacy in obtaining and effectively serving in administrative positions (1996a). Portfolios can be an effective career advancement tool for both males and females which can: highlight strengths and accomplishments, serve as reflective and predictive indicators of the leadership potential of the administrative candidates (Brown & Irby, 1996b) and provide vital information to potential employers (Brown & Irby, 1996c).

The purpose of this paper is to share the findings of our recent study of the perceptions of 104 school administrators regarding the use of career advancement portfolios in the hiring process. Additionally, implications for professors in leadership preparation programs regarding the need to advance the concept of career advancement portfolios will be discussed.

Methods

The purpose of this study was to determine employer perspectives on the use of career advancement portfolios in the hiring process of administrators. The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. To what extent were selected practicing administrators in the greater Houston, Texas area familiar with the career advancement portfolio?
2. To what extent in this study did individuals use the career advancement portfolio in administrator interviews? (To what extent did the administrators in this study hire those individuals who have used career advancement portfolios?)
3. What expectations did administrators in this study have for the career advancement portfolio with regard to contents?

4. What did administrators in this study recommend regarding the use of the career advancement portfolio during the interview process?

Procedures, Participants, and Setting

This study was conducted using a structured interview technique (Fontana & Frey, 1994). The principal researchers trained 26 selected educational administration graduate students to conduct the structured interviews using a four-question interview guide (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). The interviewers were assigned to interview four upper level administrators, campus level principals, or central office level administrators in three established categories of school districts, rural/small town, suburban, and urban, in the greater Houston, Texas area. The purposeful, stratified sample was used to establish representation of various school district sizes. The sample included five urban districts (n=20 administrators), 12 suburban districts (n=48 administrators), and nine rural districts (n=36 administrators). In total, 104 administrators participated in the interviews. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. Each interview was analyzed by the interviewer (graduate student) for initial types of outcomes. The total analysis involved a five-step process:

1. Each graduate student read each respective transcript and developed a set of outcomes for each of the four questions included on the interview guide.
2. The two principal researchers individually read each transcript and compiled a new set of outcomes from each interview and each question.
3. The two principal researchers reviewed the graduate students' outcomes and compared them to the two sets of principal investigators' outcomes; thus, the outcomes were revised and expanded. High inter-rater reliability was established through comparison, discussion, and consensus on coded outcomes.
4. The principal researchers used the category system to code questions 3 and 4 on all 104 transcripts. Each mention of an outcome was coded as an instance of a

particular category. Once responses were coded, they were tallied. Responses to research questions 1 and 2 were analyzed by frequency count and percentages.

Results

Results are reported by each research question and addressed through descriptive statistics and/or qualitative analysis.

Research Question 1: To what extent were selected practicing administrators in the greater Houston, Texas area familiar with the career advancement portfolio? Sixty-eight percent, or 70 administrators of the total sample of administrators interviewed, were familiar with a career advancement portfolio. Administrators indicated familiarity through actual review of career advancement portfolios of teachers or administrators or through reading in professional journals.

Research Question 2: To what extent did individuals use the career advancement portfolio in interviews of which the administrators in this study have been a part? (To what extent had the administrators in this study hired those individuals who have used career advancement portfolios?). Of the 70 administrators who indicated familiarity with the career advancement portfolio, only 12 indicated that they were familiar with their use among administrative candidates. Of the 12 who were familiar with the use of career advancement portfolios by administrators, 10 indicated hiring administrator candidates who presented their portfolios during the interview. Two of the 12 administrators indicated that only three individuals who had interviewed for administrative positions had used portfolios and that none of those three individuals were hired. The other 58 administrators in the study indicated that teachers had used portfolios in interviews, but that they had not interviewed administrator candidates who presented portfolios. On the other hand, one administrator indicated that she would not even interview assistant principal or supervisory candidates for assistant principal positions unless they presented a career advancement portfolio.

Research Question 3: What expectations did administrators in this study have for the career advancement portfolio with regard to contents? When administrators were asked what they would expect to see in a career advancement portfolio, 58 of the 104 responded that they would like to see evidence or examples of conferences or workshops attended or presented. Twenty-eight indicated that they would expect a resume to be included in the portfolio, while 20 stated they would like to see evaluations of past performance included. Other contents suggested for inclusion in the career advancement portfolio by at least 10 of the respondents were: 1) examples of projects or descriptions of the process for project completion, 2) letters of recommendation, 3) educational philosophy, 4) honors, awards, and accolades, 5) plans, such as discipline management or staff development plans, and 6) leadership roles or committee memberships held. Suggestions of items for inclusion in the portfolio made by five or fewer of the respondents were visions/goals, transcripts, certificates, and evidence of community involvement.

Research Question 4: What did administrators in this study recommend regarding the use of the career advancement portfolio during the interview process? Thirty of the 104 respondents (29%) stated that they did not know how the career advancement portfolio should be used in the interview process. Twenty-seven of the respondents indicated that the portfolio should be presented prior to the interview. Seventeen suggested that it be used during the interview, while 13 recommended that the portfolio be left with the interview team following the interview. Twelve stated that it should be presented at the end of the interview, while three respondents felt it should be presented at the beginning of the interview. Two stated that it should not be used in the interview process.

Discussion and Recommendations

The trend in the use of career advancement portfolios in the hiring process of administrators (Brown & Irby, 1996; Guaglinone, 1996), holds implications for leadership preparation programs. As faculty in leadership preparation programs begin to take steps in reforming their programs and in making coursework more relevant, the inclusion of the career advancement portfolio is suggested. In fact, an earlier study program (Brown & Irby, 1996) indicated that the career advancement portfolio was one of the most relevant topics covered within the leadership preparation. In that study women stated that developing the career advancement portfolio caused them to reflect on their accomplishments and on areas in their career that needed improvement and assisted in realistic and meaningful goal setting. Additionally, they indicated that they developed confidence by "thinking through" their leadership framework and by articulating their experiences, goals, and philosophies in a clear and concise manner.

Based on this study, initial recommendations for further research include: (a) replication of this study in other states with leadership preparation programs requiring similar types of activities, (b) analysis regarding the degree of the relationship between the use of career advancement portfolios by administrative candidates in leadership preparation programs and those administrative candidates' success rates for securing administrative positions, (c) the degree of awareness of university professors of educational leadership regarding career advancement portfolios for preservice and practicing administrators and their use in the hiring process, and (d) the degree of inclusion of the concept of career advancement portfolios for administrators in the leadership preparation curriculum.

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